

Editorial Department.

IN a former number, (October, 1875,) we discussed at some length, the subject of the existence of "definite motor, or psycho-motor centers in the cerebral cortex," with special reference to the views that had then just been put forth by Dr. Brown-Sequard, in a lecture delivered at Boston, and published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* for July 29, 1875.

In that lecture, Dr. Brown-Sequard took strong ground against the existence of such centres in the cerebral cortex, as had been held by Fritsch and Hitzig, Ferrier and others.

Instead of cells having similar functions, being grouped together in more or less definite centers, as they are known to be, in other parts of the nervous system, he declared in effect, that they are scattered broadcast throughout the cortex, so that if one part of the same should be destroyed by disease, others could perform the same office, on account of containing cells, having the same functions as those that had been destroyed. One part of the cortex could vicariously perform all or nearly all, the offices, if necessary, of any other part.

In accordance with this view, he declared, "that the character of the symptoms of brain diseases, is not in the least dependent on the seat of the lesion, so that a lesion of the same part may produce a great variety of symptoms, while on the other hand the same symptoms may be due to the most various causes, various not only as regards the kind, but also as regards the seat of the organic alteration." And to the support of this mode of viewing the structure and mode of action of the brain, he cited the results of an examination of the records of a large number of cases, which appeared to show that his doctrine was well founded. He cited also certain experiments made on the lower animals, which seemed to look in the same direction. Nearly all of the pathological cases

dated back a number of years, and referred generally to instances, in which as a rule, superficial and inadequate examinations were made, and on which for that reason it would seem but little reliance could be placed.

The conclusion we then reached was to the effect, that the doctrines of Hitzig, Ferrier and others, in respect to the localization of cerebral functions were still tenable in spite of the objections of Dr. Brown-Sequard. Since then we have seen no reason for changing the views then declared.

Our hope which we then expressed, that the facts relating to the subject so far as known, might receive a critical and authoritative examination, has lately been partly fulfilled, in the elaborate discussions recently held at various meetings of the Biological Society of Paris, between Dr. Brown-Sequard on the one hand, and M.M. Charcot and Luys on the other hand.

The former maintained at great length, the same views that were set forth in his Boston lecture almost a year previously, and some intimations of which had been given still earlier in the *Archives of Scientific and Practical Medicine*. The peculiar opinions of Dr. Brown-Sequard, were vigorously but politely combatted at every vital point by M. Charcot, and others, as already intimated.

In this issue of the JOURNAL will be found a very full abstract of this remarkable and interesting discussion, and which we commend to our readers.

M. Brown-Sequard, as will be observed, rests his case on clinical evidence from all possible sources in the domain of medical literature, and apparently without sufficient attention to its trustworthiness, or accuracy, and also on experiments on the lower animals.

M.M. Charcot and Luys base their opposition on anatomical and clinical grounds. They reject the evidence from experiments on the lower animals, in so far as it conflicts with well ascertained anatomical and clinical facts, in respect to the human being. They also reject all clinical and pathological anatomy observations, which do not bear the stamp of thoroughness, and were not made with the use of improved and critical methods. They, therefore, promptly set aside M. Brown-Sequard's cases, and by consequence his conclusions,

and we think, so far as can be seen at present, with much justice. It is possible, we think, for cases, say of right hemiplegia to occur, in which the demonstrable lesion is in the right hemisphere. But even such cases in our opinion, may be explained in such way as to be consistent with the generally received notions, as to decussation of the sensory and motor tracts. But we would refer our readers to the account of the discussion between these Nestor's of Neurological Medicine, which we publish in the periscope of the present number. For ourselves, we wish to be ranged as sharing, for the present, the opinions of the accomplished clinical chief of the Salpetriere, M. Charcot.

WE would call the attention of our home readers, who are members of the American Neurological Association to its second annual meeting, which opens the seventh of June, in the city of New York.

There can be no question now, but that there are enough members of the profession in the United States, specially devoted to the study of the nervous system in its various scientific and practical relations, to justify the formation and maintenance of such an organization as the present one.

There can be no excuse, save a lack of unselfish devotion to the objects of the Association, for its failure, if it should not succeed in becoming one of the permanent and useful medical bodies in this country.

We earnestly hope to see it, and through it the medical profession in this country, led to take some honorable part in the extraordinary activity which characterizes the profession abroad in respect to everything which pertains to the nervous system in health and disease. In respect to no other part of the body are there so many important open questions, as in respect to the nervous system. We desire to see nothing less than an earnest endeavor on the part of our Association, by definite action, in committee and otherwise, to not only arouse increased attention in our own country to the important department of medicine to which it is devoted, but to contribute to the solution of some of the many vexed and new questions now alive in neurological medicine. By all means, let each mem-

ber, if necessary, sacrifice something in the way of time and means, at this important juncture, to the success of the forthcoming meeting, which we hope is not to be permitted to suffer by reason of the attractions of the more imposing assemblages at Philadelphia.

WE have received the programme of the International Medical Congress, to be held in Philadelphia in September next. It will be largely attended by the more prominent members of the profession of this country, and there is reason to expect also many from abroad. The attention it has excited is evident by the notices of the medical press, not merely in this country but in all parts of Europe.

Among the sections into which the Congress is to be divided we notice none on Neurology properly speaking, though other less important specialties are represented. Papers in this department will, therefore, probably be referred to the sections on medicine or mental diseases. The only one announced is by Dr. Roberts Bartholow; a discussion of the question, "Do the conditions of modern life favor specially the development of nervous diseases?" We hope, nevertheless, the Congress will be not less fertile in this department than in others. There is every reason to believe that it will be an occasion of the greatest medical interest, and in all respects a grand success.

NOTE.—Owing to a change of printer at the time of going to press, and an unfortunate accident, this issue of the JOURNAL appears at least three weeks behind time. A similar combination of circumstances can hardly occur a second time, and we promise our readers that in the future, each number shall appear as near as possible about the fifteenth of each month of issue.
